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The Trump administration is putting USAID staffers on leave worldwide and firing at least 1,600

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER
Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) —

The Trump administration moved its fast-paced dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development toward what appeared to be its final phases, telling all but a fraction of staffers worldwide that they were on leave as of Monday and notifying at least 1,600 of the U.S.-based staffers they were being fired. The move was the latest and one of the biggest steps in what President Donald Trump and cost-cutting ally Elon Musk say is their goal of gutting the six-decade-old aid and development agency in a broader campaign to slash the size of the federal government.

The move comes after a federal judge on Friday allowed the administration to move forward with its plan to pull thousands of USAID staffers off the job in the United States and around the world. U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols rejected pleas in a lawsuit from employees



Retired United States Agency for International Development worker Julie Hanson Swanson, left, join supporters of USAID workers outside the USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs office in Washington, Friday, Feb. 21, 2025.

Associated Press

to keep temporarily blocking the government's plan. "As of 11:59 p.m. EST on Sunday, February 23, 2025, all USAID direct hire personnel, with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leader-

ship and/or specially designated programs, will be placed on administrative leave globally," according to the notices sent to USAID workers that were viewed by The Associated Press. At the same time, the agency said in the no-

tices to staffers that it was beginning a firing process called reduction in force that would eliminate 2,000 U.S.-based jobs. A version of the notice posted later on USAID's website put the number of positions to be eliminated lower, at 1,600.

The administration gave no explanation for the discrepancy. USAID and the State Department did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Within hours of that notice, individual staffers began reporting receiving the notices of their upcoming dismissal under the reduction in force. The Trump appointee running USAID, deputy administrator Pete Marocco, has indicated he plans to keep about 600 mostly U.S.-based staffers on the job in the meantime, in part to arrange travel for USAID staffers and families abroad.

The move escalates a monthlong push to dismantle the agency, which has included closing its headquarters in Washington and shutting down thousands of aid and development programs worldwide following a freeze on all foreign assistance. A judge later temporarily blocked the funding freeze. Trump and Musk contend that USAID's work is wasteful and furthers a liberal agenda. □



Kash Patel, President Donald Trump's new director of the FBI, reacts as Alexis Wilkins watches during Patel's ceremonial swearing-in, Friday, Feb. 21, 2025, in the Indian Treaty Room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on the White House campus in Washington.

Associated Press

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — New FBI Director Kash Patel was sworn in Monday as acting chief of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, taking the helm of two separate and sprawling Justice Department agencies, according

to a person familiar with the matter. Patel was sworn in at ATF headquarters just days after he became director of the FBI, said the person who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter. It's not immediately clear

New FBI Director Kash Patel is sworn in as acting ATF chief, AP source says

if President Donald Trump intends to nominate Patel for the ATF post, or what the administration's plans are for the agency that has long been the target of Republicans. Justice Department and White House officials didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Patel will now oversee the bureau of roughly 5,500 employees that's responsible for enforcing the nation's laws around firearms, explosives and arson. Among other things, it's in charge of licensing federal firearms dealers, tracing guns used in crimes and analyzing intelligence in shooting investigations. Democrats raised alarm at Patel's nomination for FBI director over his lack of management experience

compared to past directors and because of a vast catalog of incendiary past statements, which include calling investigators who scrutinized Trump "government gangsters."

Gun safety groups that opposed Patel's nomination as FBI director highlighted his support for Gun Owners of America, a gun rights group that has called for the ATF to be abolished. In a social media post, the group called Patel a "patriot who understands that the Second Amendment right of the People to keep and bear arms SHALL NOT BE INFRINGED."

Patel spoke at Gun Owners of America conference last year, telling the crowd: "My mission is your mission and spread it across America and utilize it to defeat

the most destructive operation in U.S. history.

And that is unelected bureaucrats seizing our Constitutional rights from you every single day and chipping away at your freedoms every single day."

The move to install Patel as ATF director follows Attorney General Pam Bondi's firing of the bureau's top lawyer last week.

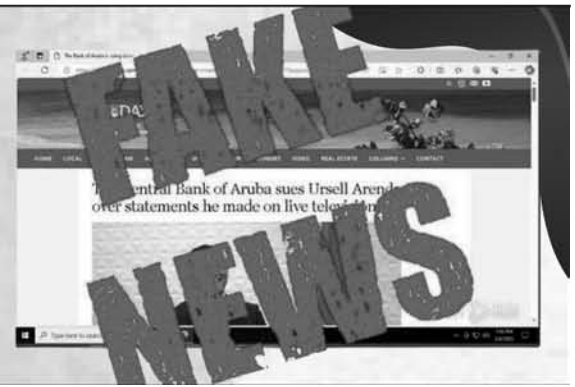
Bondi said Friday in a Fox News interview that she fired chief counsel Pamela Hicks because the agency was "targeting gun owners."

Hicks, who spent more than 20 years as a Justice Department lawyer, said in a social media post that being ATF chief counsel was the "highest honor" of her career. □

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The few Republicans who still oppose Trump gather in search of a path to oppose him

By **BILL BARROW**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservatives from across the country filled a ballroom a few blocks from the White House and lamented that the United States is abandoning the ideals that forged a great nation. Some attendees donned red hats with various inscriptions mocking President Donald Trump and his “Make America Great Again” movement.

It was the largest gathering to date of the “Principles First Summit,” expanded upon Trump’s second term to welcome independents and center-left Democrats under a shared pro-democracy, anti-authoritarian aim.

“This is not a time to bend the knee, to play along,” said Heath Mayo, the Yale-educated attorney who founded Principles First five years ago for self-identified politically homeless conservatives. “This is a time for stiffening your spine, standing up and getting ready for a long fight.”

Yet three days of conversations and recriminations still left 1,200 attendees without a clear roadmap to loosen Trump’s grip on the conservative movement and America’s national identity. There was not even consensus on whether to fight within Republican spheres at all, migrate to the Democratic Party or find a different path altogether.

“It makes you feel better to know that you’re not alone and that you’re not crazy,” said Jeff Oppenheim, a retired U.S. Army colonel from Austin, Texas. “The question is how to translate that into action in a political system that’s very diffi-



Businessman Mark Cuban speaks after attending meetings at the White House, March 4, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

cult to influence, because it’s structured in a way that two parties have complete control.”

Mark Cuban, the entrepreneur and “Shark Tank” co-host who was one of then-Vice President Kamala Harris’ most prominent surrogates last fall, got a rousing ovation when he took the stage but vowed that he would not run for the White House. He dismissed the Democratic Party, profanely, as unable to sell its own message.

“I’m not here to throw him under the bus,” Cuban said of Trump, praising the Republican president’s ability as a marketer who convinced voters he could help them.

Democrats, Cuban said, make their critiques of Trump moot because they “can’t sell worth s.”

Trump’s allies mocked the gathering in advance as full of “RINOs,” or Republicans in name only. White House communications director Steven Cheung

called it “the Cuck Convention” on his government account. The word “cuck,” which describes a man who likes to watch his wife have sex with other men, was frequently used during the campaign to insult and emasculate rivals.

Trump has far greater control of the Republican Party in his second term, with allies across Congress and the loyalty of most of the party’s base. But his few remaining rivals within the party argue there are still ways to break his hold.

Former U.S. Rep. Adam Kinzinger, a frequent Trump target who was among the people to receive a preemptive pardon from President Joe Biden, pointed to Republicans’ narrow 218-215 majority in the House and said lawmakers are privately nervous as recent town halls show voter anger over billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk and his sweeping moves to fire federal workers, shut down agencies and limit federal

services.

Kinzinger urged critics to ratchet up pressure in public settings because critical town hall audiences, he argued, offer the most “uncomfortable” moments of a politician’s job.

“Right now, Republican members of Congress fear one person: Donald Trump. They don’t fear you,” Kinzinger said. “When they start fearing you, that’s when they start having a different calculus.”

Julie Spilsbury, a councilmember from Mesa, Arizona, wants to maintain her place in Republican ranks. Like more than two dozen attendees and speakers interviewed by The Associated Press, Spilsbury cast her 2024 ballot for Harris for president.

But she also publicly endorsed the Democratic nominee, saying it was a matter of “character and integrity.”

She now faces an ongoing recall effort by Trump backers in Mesa.

“If you’re looking for something you can do, send me \$10” for her retention campaign, Spilsbury told fellow conference attendees.

When Asa Hutchinson, the former Arkansas governor who ran in the 2024 Republican presidential primary, and Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, a centrist Democrat, offered carefully measured assessments of Trump’s opening weeks, they got mixed or muted responses. Especially tepid was the reaction when Hutchinson said he believes Trump when the president says he will respect court decisions in the many early challenges to his executive actions. But roars rang out for the police officers who tried to protect the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and their unyielding assessments of Trump and his pardon of 1,500 supporters who breached the seat of Congress, including many who violently attacked law enforcement.

“We need to hold on to the outrage and hold on to the anger and set aside the fear,” insisted Michael Fanone, a former Washington officer who was attacked by rioters. Asked whether he would accept an invitation to talk to Trump, Fanone said the president is incapable of being convinced he is wrong and dismissed him with a profanity. Fanone and his fellow officers later were accosted in an upstairs lobby by Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio, freshly freed from prison by Trump’s pardon. The following day, Principles First leaders received an emailed bomb threat specifically mentioning Fanone, his mother’s address and other potential targets. □

Pennsylvania hostage-taking and shootout highlight rising violence against U.S. hospital workers

By **MEAD GRUVER**
Associated Press

A man who took hostages in a Pennsylvania hospital during a shooting that killed a police officer and wounded five other people highlights the rising violence against U.S. health-care workers and the challenge of protecting them. Diogenes Archangel-Ortiz, 49, carried a pistol and zip ties into the intensive care unit at UPMC Memorial Hospital in southern Pennsylvania's York County and took staff members hostage Saturday before he was killed in a shootout with police, officials said. The attack also left a doctor, nurse, custodian and two other officers wounded.

Officers opened fire as Archangel-Ortiz held at gunpoint a female staff member whose hands had been zip-tied, police said. The man apparently intentionally targeted the hospital after he was in contact with the intensive care unit earlier in the week for medical care involving someone else, according to the York County district attorney. Such violence at hospitals is on the rise, often in emer-



Linda Shields leaves flowers in front of the West York Police Department after a police officer was killed responding to a shooting at UPMC Memorial Hospital in York, Pa. on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025.
Associated Press

gency departments but also maternity wards and intensive care units, hospital security consultant Dick Sem said.

"Many people are more confrontational, quicker to become angry, quicker to become threatening," Sem said. "I interview thousands of nurses and hear all the

time about how they're being abused every day."

Archangel-Ortiz's motives remained unclear but nurses report increasing harassment from the public, especially following the coronavirus pandemic, said Sem, former director of security and crisis management for Waste Management and

vice president at Pinkerton/Securitas.

In hospital attacks, unlike random mass shootings elsewhere, the shooter is often targeting somebody, sometimes resentful about the care given a relative who died, Sem noted.

"It tends to be someone who's mad at somebody,"

Sem said. "It might be a domestic violence situation or employees, ex-employees. There's all kinds of variables."

At WellSpan Health, a nearby hospital where some of the victims were taken, Megan Foltz said she has been worried about violence since she began working as a nurse nearly 20 years ago.

"In the critical care environment, of course there's going to be heightened emotions. People are losing loved ones. There can be gang violence, domestic violence. Inebriated individuals," Foltz said.

Besides the fear of being hurt themselves, nurses fear leaving their patients unguarded. "If you step away from a bedside to run, to hide, to keep safe, you're leaving your patient vulnerable," she said.

Healthcare and social assistance employees suffered almost three-quarters of nonfatal attacks on workers in the private sector in 2021 and 2022 for a rate more than five times the national average, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. □

DeSantis promotes his wife as next Florida governor and takes a shot at Trump's pick

By **KATE PAYNE**
Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — As Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis approaches the end of his second term in office, he's talking up one potential heir to succeed him in 2026: his wife, Casey DeSantis. And he's taking a shot at President Donald Trump's pick to be the next governor.

Questioned by reporters in Tampa on Monday, DeSantis touted his wife as a staunch conservative who would build on his legacy and argued that the state's first lady could pull in even more voters than he did. DeSantis won a dominant reelection victory in 2022 with a nearly 20-point margin.

"She's somebody that has, I think, the intestinal fortitude and the dedication to conservative principles," DeSantis said of his wife. "Anything we've accom-

plished, she'd be able to take to the next level."

The comments came days after the president threw his support behind U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds, a Florida

Republican who has been a prominent surrogate for Trump on the campaign trail and cable news.

"We've achieved victories in Florida," DeSantis said Monday.

"A guy like Byron, he just hasn't been a part of any of the victories that we've had here over the left over these last years."

DeSantis' comments create a potential faceoff between the Republican governor and the president who soundly defeated him last year for the Republican presidential nomination. DeSantis, who is term-limited, may run for president again in 2028 and has worked to rebuild his relationship with Trump.

The aspirations of the state's first lady have long

been the subject of Tallahassee parlor talk. That chatter has grown louder in recent weeks as tensions have bubbled between the governor and Trump's allies in the Florida Legislature.

"Byron Donalds would be a truly Great and Powerful Governor for Florida and, should he decide to run, will have my Complete and Total Endorsement," Trump wrote Thursday on social media. "RUN, BYRON, RUN!" Donalds' office did not immediately respond to requests for comment. He addressed the Conservative Political Action Conference last week after Trump's post and told the audience to "stay tuned" about his future plans. □



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, left, looks on as his wife Casey DeSantis speaks at a campaign event in Bluffton, S.C., June 2, 2023.

Associated Press

A report says Chinese fishing vessels used North Korean crews in breach of UN bans

By HYUNG-JIN KIM

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

A fleet of Chinese fishing vessels used North Korean crews between 2019 and 2024 in violation of U.N. bans, and many people were apparently subjected to abuses including being trapped at sea for years, a report said Monday.

The Environmental Justice Foundation, a London-based group specializing in environmental and human rights issues, said it identified the presence of North Koreans on 12 Chinese tuna long-liners operating in the southwest Indian Ocean. The report was mostly based on interviews with 19 Indonesians and Filipinos who worked alongside them.

"The testimony received from Indonesian and Filipino crew members suggests that concerted efforts were made to hide the presence of North Koreans on these vessels, and that those North Koreans on board were forced to work for as many as 10 years at sea in some instances without ever stepping foot on land," the report said.

"This would constitute



Chinese fishing vessels navigate past a beacon in the Zhubi Reef off Spratly Islands in South China Sea, July 18, 2012.

Associated Press

forced labor of a magnitude that surpasses much of that witnessed in a global fishing industry already replete with abuse," it added.

The group said the North Koreans were passed from vessel to vessel to prevent them from returning to land. It cited unidentified Asian crew members as saying

their North Korean shipmates were not allowed to use mobile phones or leave vessels during port visits. The group said it wasn't able to estimate the number of North Koreans aboard the Chinese vessels because of the transfers. The use of North Korean crew would be a breach of 2017 U.N. Security Coun-

cil resolutions that required member states not to issue work permits to North Koreans and repatriate all remaining North Korean workers from their territories by the end of 2019.

The sanctions were adopted after North Korea conducted nuclear and long-range missile tests in violation of earlier council

resolutions.

The group said the use of North Korean crew also appears to have bypassed legal frameworks in the U.K. and the European Union designed to prevent goods produced by North Koreans from entering their supply chains. The EJP said that it also found ships that were suspected of collecting fish from the Chinese vessels had entered key markets in Asia including Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

Along with Russia, China is suspected of not fully enforcing U.N. sanctions on North Korea and has vetoed U.S.-led efforts to toughen U.N. sanctions on North Korea despite its banned weapons tests.

China's Foreign Ministry did not comment immediately. The EJP said it's the first time North Korean labor has been publicly documented on a distant-water fishing vessel. Before the 2019 U.N. deadline, tens of thousands of North Koreans were reported to be working abroad, mostly at factories and restaurants in China and logging camps and construction sites in Russia, to bring in much-needed foreign currency. □

Israel refuses entry to 2 E.U. lawmakers and accuses 1 of promoting boycotts of it

By MELANIE LIDMAN and LORNE COOK

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel on Monday denied entry to two European Union lawmakers, accusing one of promoting boycotts of the country.

Lynn Boylan, who chairs the European Parliament EU-Palestine delegation, and Rima Hassan were refused entry at Ben-Gurion airport and ordered to return to Europe.

Interior Minister Moshe Arbel said French politician Hassan has "consistently worked to promote boycotts against Israel in addition to numerous public statements both on social

media and in media interviews." No reasons were immediately given for Boylan being denied entry. Hassan was born in Aleppo, Syria, and, like Boylan, is a member of The Left group in the EU parliament. On Friday, The Left group called for the immediate suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement a pact that underpins their relations given the International Court of Justice investigation into crimes committed against Palestinians in Gaza.

Boylan said she had planned to meet with Palestinian Authority officials, representatives of civil society organizations and

people living under Israeli occupation. Boylan is a member of the Sinn Féin party in Ireland, which has been among the most vocal countries in criticizing the Israeli government over its treatment of Palestinians. "This utter contempt from Israel is the result of the international community failing to hold them to account," Boylan said in a statement. "Israel is a rogue state, and this disgraceful move shows the level of utter disregard that they have for international law. Europe must now hold Israel to account."

Israeli legislators passed a law this month that prohibits entry to people

who have denied Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack or expressed support for the international prosecution of Israeli soldiers.

The law, which applies to non-citizens and non-res-

idents of Israel, builds on previous legislation that denied entry to anyone calling for a boycott of Israel. The law also bans the entry of Holocaust deniers. □



Member of European Parliament Rima Hassan speaks during a pro-Palestinian demonstration outside the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2024.

Associated Press

Morocco says it dismantled Islamic State cell that was planning attacks

By SAM METZ

Associated Press

SALE, Morocco (AP) — Moroccan authorities this month arrested a dozen people they said were planning attacks on behalf of the Islamic State in the Sahel, a region south of the Sahara Desert, officials said Monday.

The discovery of the terrorist cell and what authorities called an "imminent dangerous terrorist plot" reflect the expanding ambitions of extremist groups in the region.

Authorities did not provide details of the plot or motivations of those arrested, but released photographs and videos showing officers raiding terrorist cells throughout the country.

The images showed weapons stockpiles found during police raids, Islamic State flags drawn on walls, and thousands of dollars of cash.

"Morocco remains a major target in the agenda of all terrorist organizations operating in the Sahel," Habiboub Cherkaoui, the head of Morocco's Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations, said at a news conference.



An agent from the Central Bureau for Judicial Investigations (BCIJ) stands behind items the agency says they seized during raids on suspected terrorist cells, during a news conference at the BCIJ in Sale, Morocco, Monday, Feb. 24, 2025.

Associated Press

ference.

Militant groups have been expanding their presence in the Sahel, capitalizing on instability in countries including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

Since French troops began withdrawing almost two

years ago, the Islamic State in the Sahel has launched deadly campaigns and taken control of lucrative transit routes.

Groups like Islamic State in the Sahel have found support in impoverished communities that feel neglect-

ed by their governments. Their growth has destabilized and in several cases contributed to the overthrow of elected leaders. It has alarmed neighboring states including in North Africa and coastal west Africa and worried western

powers concerned about militant groups using their regional bases to orchestrate violence elsewhere.

Authorities said the Morocco-based cell called itself "the Lions of the Caliphate in the Maghreb" and took direction from Islamic State in the Sahel commanders. More than a year of tracking done by Morocco's General Directorate for Territorial Surveillance showed Islamic State in the Sahel commanders worked to recruit, arm and direct sympathizers to carry out attacks in Morocco.

The weapons found include materials to make explosives including nail bombs, dynamite and gas cylinders as well as knives, rifles and hand guns whose serial numbers had been scratched off.

Investigators said the 12 men arrested ranged from 18 to 40 years old and were apprehended in nine different cities, including Casablanca, Fez and Tangier. The majority were unmarried and had not finished high school.

They have not yet been charged under Morocco's anti-terrorism laws. □

More pressure on Rwanda as Congo says rebel uprising has killed over 7,000 people this year

By JEAN-YVES KAMALE and WILSON MCMAKIN

Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP)

— More than 7,000 people have died this year as Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have captured unprecedented amounts of territory in mineral-rich eastern Congo, Congo's prime minister said Monday, as the European Union announced it would review an agreement with Rwanda on critical raw materials. Judith Suminwa Tuluka told the U.N. Human Rights Council that the security and humanitarian situation in the region "has reached alarming levels."

The conflict has accelerated in recent weeks, with the rebels taking the key city of

Goma in January and Bukavu, another provincial capital, this month. M23

is the most potent of the many armed groups vying for a foothold in Congo's



Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo Judith Suminwa talks to journalists during a press conference organized by the Geneva Association of United Nations Correspondents (ACANU), at a side event of the High-Level Segment of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Monday, Feb. 24, 2025.

Associated Press

east, which has trillions of dollars of mostly untapped mineral wealth crucial to the world's technology.

Pressure grew on Rwanda. The European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, called Congo's territorial integrity "non-negotiable" and said EU defense consultations with Rwanda have been suspended they cooperate on missions in Mozambique and elsewhere and their memorandum of understanding regarding critical raw materials will be under review.

The EU and Rwanda a year ago signed the memorandum of understanding to "nurture sustainable and resilient value chains for critical raw materials," noting that Rwanda "produc-

es tin, tungsten, gold and niobium, and has potential for lithium and rare earth elements."

The EU announcement comes as the government of Congo, far richer in minerals, has accused Rwanda of looting its resources, and after the United States last week urged an "immediate cessation of sourcing of minerals from areas controlled by M23."

There was no immediate comment from Rwanda on what could be a blow to its economy. The U.N. has warned that the fighting poses a wider threat to the region, which has seen decades of simmering conflict that has displaced millions. □

Aruba's underwater wonderland

ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.



Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.



Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let

their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.




Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.



Mangel Halto


Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □



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Po-Ke Ono Azure invites guests to experience their exclusive breakfast menu And don't miss their end-of-the-month brunch



ORANJESTAD – Po-Ke Ono Azure is proud to invite foodies to enjoy their exclusive breakfast menu, where guests are invited to experience mornings infused with Asian-inspired flavors, fresh ingredients, and a touch of tropical paradise.

Located at the scenic Azure Residences at Eagle Beach, Po-Ke Ono now offers an exceptional morning menu with options like the Thai Breakfast Bowl, Acai Bowl, and Asian Omelet. Designed to bring unique flavors to Aruba's breakfast scene, the menu also includes fresh coffee, mimosas, and tropical juices, perfect for pairing with the restaurant's relaxed beachside atmosphere.

"Our goal was to create a breakfast experience that captures the essence of Po-Ke Ono and brings a fresh twist to mornings here at Azure," said Executive Chef Urvin Croes, founder of Po-Ke Ono. "Each dish is crafted with care, featuring ingredients that highlight the vibrant, Asian-inspired flavors we're known for." Available every morning at Po-Ke Ono Azure, the new breakfast lineup is ideal for early risers and those looking for a unique start to



their day.

guests to indulge for only \$25.

Po-Ke Ono's next brunch event will be held on March 23rd 2025.

Don't miss their monthly Po-Ke Brunch!

Every end of the month, Po-Ke Ono Azure opens its kitchen for a special brunch event, where guests are invited to delight in their all-you-can-eat Asian-inspired brunch, accompanied with free-flowing mimosas with an upgrade of champagne of your choice. The star of the brunch experience is their signature cocktail "The Albino", an Asian-infused white sangria, made in a pitcher for

About Po-Ke Ono Azure

Since its inception, Po-Ke Ono has quickly become a culinary landmark in Aruba, known for its signature fusion of Hawaiian and Asian flavors. With two locations across the island, Po-Ke Ono continues to innovate and delight, with Po-Ke Ono Azure offering exclusive breakfast options at the iconic Eagle Beach. □



Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Bucuti and Tara Beach Resort!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors of Aruba.



The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were: Distinguished Visitors

Mrs. Kelly and Mr. Charles Theis from Southport, North Carolina, United States.

Mrs. Keyttin Silve representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Bucuti and Tara Beach Resort bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honoree was:

- The people. Over the years,

we have connected with so many friendly, kind, helpful, and caring souls.

- The beautiful beaches, along with Aruba's sunny, reliable weather.
- The overall personal safety of the island for travelers.
- The ease of transportation to/from the island, as well as driving independently once there.
- Our stay at the Bucuti for the last 10 years. Everything about it. It has become home away from home.

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island". □

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Ever heard of the cah'i orgel? A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)—The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it. After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel "Josefina", and successfully debuted it on the streets of Barquisimeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. made from mahogany wood, it contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces. By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the "wiri", a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz, tumba, mazurka and more.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when

Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the



"tingilingi box."

Source: "E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao" by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirsing-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.

Aruba's most family-friendly beaches

(Oranjestad)—One of the biggest concerns that parents have when travelling with their children is a guarantee of their safety and healthy enjoyment. Therefore, we thought it would be a great help to travelling parents to list off some of the most family-friendly beaches around the island.



Baby Beach in San Nicolas

Baby Beach is one Aruba's most popular and visited beaches, and for good reason: This sandy and quiet lagoon is a great place for parents to sit back and relax while their children play in the shallow shores of the beach. Beside the relaxing atmosphere, there are also several services that may accommodate your stay, like a parking lot, sun tent rentals, chairs, bathrooms and a snack bar right at the far left of the beach.

Mangel Halto in Pos Chiquito

Mangel Halto is situated in

the back streets of the Pos Chiquito city. Though there are several stairs on the sides of the beach cliff leading you down, the best spot for families to hang out is across the bridge, passed the mangrove trees near the entrance sign. Here, there are small and big palapas, perfect for big and small families to set up their belongings. In this area, the shore is also shallow, falling right around your knee before slowly getting deeper: perfect for kids to safely play.

Eagle Beach/Palm Beach in the hotel area

Yet another highly popular beach site, Eagle Beach and

Palm Beach is where most of our visitors go to tan, swim or play in the white sand. Because they are near the low-rise and high-rise hotel areas, these beaches are the most accessible for visitors on foot. These beaches also offer many palapas free to use, but you can also rent chairs and tents. Much like Baby Beach, these sites are one of the best beaches for your children to play and build sand castles.

Boca Catalina in Malmok

Boca Catalina is a small bay beach near the Malmok beach area further down the hotel areas. Though it may not be a very sandy

beach, it is relatively quiet and tranquil. This is a great place for family to lay down a big blanket and have a little picnic. This is also one of the best places to snorkel, as this area is filled with little fish and corals, even close to the shore.

Palm Island

Ok, this one is technically not a beach, but a must-visit attraction for family fun. This small water park oasis is located further down the Mangel Halto Beach and is reachable by boat. This water park offers 6 hours of fun activities, food, drinks, and a chance to see pink flamingoes up close! □



For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the casca-

bel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cucularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color. The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and

Unique fauna of Aruba

lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in

a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/> ☐



Aruba: the legend behind its name

(Oranjestad)—Most folkloric tales and legends in Aruba revolve around our indigenous ancestors, who came from mainland Venezuela, and discovered the island and made it into their new home. This particular legend tells the story of the birth of the Aruba name.

The legend follows the life of Arua, an indigenous Cacique originally from Aroa in the Falcon state in Venezuela in the year 50 AD. Arua had a son around the year 70 AD with his wife Shira, who they named Corobori. When Corobori was old enough, he joined his father on the usual boat trip to the islands of Curacao and Bonaire to gather salt.

On their way back to Mainland Venezuela, they were caught up in a heavy rain storm—a side effect from a passing, but far away, hurricane. Of course, because of the lack of motors and sail, their boat was left in the mercy of the heavy winds. After a while, the storm started to pass, and the clouds began to clear up. Finally able to see around them, the Cacique spotted land approximately an hour away. So, they started to row in that direction until they reached the coast.

Once they arrived on what they thought was Venezuela, they decided to stay the night and fix their kayak. The next morning, the Cacique ordered his son and a few warriors to go find any sign of population in the area: "Corobori," Arua said. "Don't come back without news. It's in your hands how long we stay here till we find our family. So, if you need to take a week to gather information, we will wait for you."

"Don't worry," Corobori replied. "As soon as we have any information, we will let you know." Armed with arrows and spears, backpacks filled with food and water containers, they set off. They climbed several small hills, but no sign of a village. They crossed different dry riverbeds, but no sign of anything. When the sun finally descended, they found themselves near a fairly tall hill and decided to climb it for a better view of a village. This hill was called Pan Dushi or Orcuyo, which today we call Hooiberg.

The next morning, they could clearly see that they have landed on an island, but an unfamiliar one at that. When Corobori went back to where his father was waiting, he told him the news: "Father Arua, you have just discovered an island, but it is not Curacao or Bonaire. Far in the south, we saw the big mountains of our homeland Venezuela, which we could have never seen on the other island. This leads us to believe we are on a new island. But that's not all. When the sun came up, we saw in the distance a glowing plain, which we think may be salt."

The Cacique was pleased to hear of his son's findings. He decided to stay a couple days on the newly-discovered island in search for salt. The next morning they ascended Hooiberg again and stayed to see if they could find nearby smoke, indicating an inhabitant village. But they found nothing. So they went back to their initial arrival settlement, now known as Santo Largo in Savaneta. The next morning they hiked along the Spaans Lagoen near the Mangel Halto Beach and reached the area of Bushiri. There, they boarded their kayaks and heading to what we know now as Malmok, where they found rocks of salt. After a couple days of exploring the island and gathering some salt rocks, they left for Venezuela, where they were reunited with their families.

Throughout the year, they travelled back and forth to Aruba, collecting salt. After a while they settled on the island, generations of families living along the coast. Corobori was the first indigenous inhabitant in our history to explore the entirety of the island.

Arua, after decades as the leader of his tribe, spent his last days on the island. Having reached 80 years old, he called for his family on his death bed. In his hammock, he said: "My children, many years have passed, and I've asked my warrior to bring me back to the island so I can laid to rest. The God of living has given me the gift of life to see my son, grandchildren and great grandchildren. But now he is calling me home. Corobori, my torch is now passed to you. Guide our people, and be the leader you were always meant to become. If one day you leave my island, do not forget that it is also yours. This is my last wish: When I die, bury me in our maize plantation."

And so when the Cacique passed away, his wishes were granted and he was laid to rest in the area we now know as the Paradera Cemetery. Where he used to live, they built the Paradera Church.

And that is the tale of what inspired the Aruba name. In the generations that lived or travelled back and forth to the island, there were many familiar names*, like Guadiriki, a warrior who was there when the island got discovered and his son, whom he called Huliba; Corobori and his children, Corodori, Camacuri and Turibana, Masiduri; and Malmok, the 13-year-old boy who alerted the Cacique when the Caribes attacked.

Familiar names: all these names are familiar to Arubans, as these are the names of places and plants on the island.

Source: Un storia di e Indjan Arua (A story of the Indian Arua) by Adolf (Dufi) Kock



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

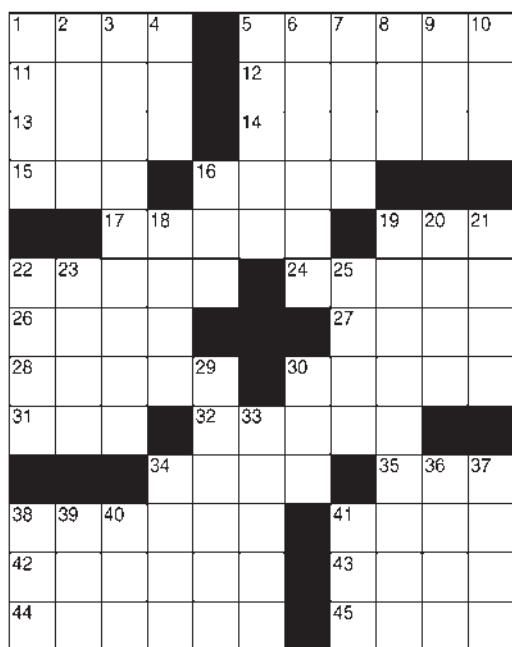
ACROSS

- 1 Letter before Bravo
- 5 Back teeth
- 11 Con man's trick
- 12 Mideast peninsula
- 13 Basilica part
- 14 Garden pavilion
- 15 Track act
- 16 Ballet leap
- 17 Full moon, for one
- 19 Tyler of "Armageddon"
- 22 Chinese or Thai
- 24 Black card
- 26 Brooklyn team
- 27 Cruise stop
- 28 Marina sight
- 30 Mink's cousin
- 31 Bat material
- 32 Team
- 34 Close
- 35 Tick off
- 38 Thorny shrub
- 41 Leave speechless
- 42 "Apollo 13" director
- 43 Teen woe

- 44 FBI employees
- 45 Coaster rider's cry

DOWN

- 1 Obsessed captain
- 2 Easy gait
- 3 Softball variety
- 4 Woodsman's tool
- 5 Wizards
- 6 Gives an address
- 7 Take it easy
- 8 Penny prez
- 9 Chest protector
- 10 — Paulo
- 16 Painter Vermeer
- 18 Diner dish
- 19 Desperate
- 20 Goofing off
- 21 Turn suddenly
- 22 Writer Seton
- 23 Sailor's septet
- 25 Falafel holder
- 29 Summer top
- 30 Unconscious
- 31 Spotted
- 33 Thigh muscles
- 34 Check a UPC
- 36 Celtic letter
- 37 Pants part
- 38 "So that's it!"
- 39 Machinery part
- 40 Really impress



2-28

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-28

CRYPTOQUOTE

CYBD SHODK MYAE KYAC

IEHLC YAJ KEYS RJK VRZRUF

GCHID. — NYEH UDHCD

VAEKJYU

Cryptoquote: THEY WHO GIVE
HAVE ALL THINGS; THEY WHO WITHHOLD
HAVE NOTHING. — INDIAN SAYING

Cruise ship Schedule: February 24 - 27 2025

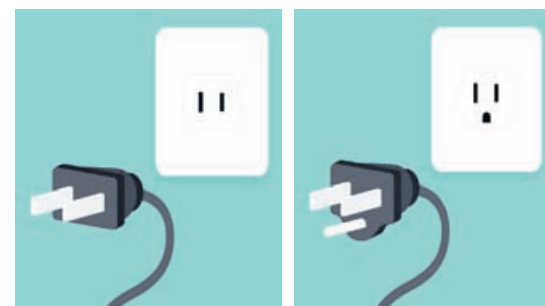
| | | | ARR | DEPT | BERTH | |
|-----|----|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| MON | 24 | EURODAM | 07.00 | 16.00 | B | 1 |
| | | RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS | 08.00 | 21.00 | C | 1 |
| | | NORWEGIAN JEWEL | 13.00 | 21.00 | I | 1 |
| TUE | 25 | AIDALUNA | 11.00 | **** | B | 1 |
| | | CARNIVAL VISTA | 13.00 | 23.00 | C | 1 |
| | | NORWEGIAN VIVA | 13.00 | 21.00 | I | 1 |
| WED | 26 | AIDALUNA - Dept. | **** | 20.00 | B | |
| | | OASIS OF THE SEAS | 08.00 | 21.00 | I | 1 |
| THU | 27 | ROTTERDAM | 08.00 | 17.00 | B | 1 |
| | | CARNIVAL VENEZIA | 09.00 | 22.00 | C | 1 |

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



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HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
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San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:

Paradera: Tel.588 6638
San Nicolas:
Centro Medico:Tel.584 5794

OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
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+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Police | 100 |
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| Noord | 527 3200 |
| Sta. Cruz | 527 2900 |
| San Nicolas | 584 5000 |
| Police Tipline | 11141 |
| Ambulancia | 911 |
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| Red Cross | 582 2219 |

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| | |
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| Taxi D.T.S. | 587 2300 |
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| A1 Taxi Serv. | 280 2828 |

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| | |
|-------------------|----------|
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Roberta Flack, Grammy-winning 'Killing Me Softly' singer with an intimate style, dies at 88

By **HILLEL ITALIE**
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Roberta Flack, the Grammy-winning singer and pianist whose intimate vocal and musical style made her one of the top recordings artists of the 1970s and an influential performer long after, died Monday. She was 88.

She died at home surrounded by her family, publicist Elaine Schock said in a statement. Flack announced in 2022 she had ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and could no longer sing. Little known before her early 30s, Flack became an overnight star after Clint Eastwood used "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" as the soundtrack for one of cinema's more memorable and explicit love scenes, between the actor and Donna Mills in his 1971 film "Play Misty for Me." The hushed, hymn-like ballad, with Flack's graceful soprano afloat on a bed of soft strings and piano, topped the Billboard pop chart in 1972 and received a Grammy for record of the year.

"The record label wanted to have it re-recorded with a faster tempo, but he said he wanted it exactly as it was," Flack told The Associated Press in 2018. "With the song as a theme song for his movie, it gained a lot of popularity and then took off."

In 1973, she matched both achievements with "Killing Me Softly With His Song," becoming the first artist to win consecutive Grammys for best record.

A classically trained pianist so gifted she received a full scholarship at age 15 to Howard, the historically Black university, Flack was discovered in the late 1960s by jazz musician Les McCann, who later wrote that "her voice touched, tapped, trapped, and kicked every emotion I've ever known." Flack was versatile enough to summon the up-tempo gospel passion of Aretha Franklin, but she favored a more



Singer Roberta Flack poses for a portrait in New York on Oct. 10, 2018.

Associated Press

measured and reflective approach, as if curating a song word by word.

For Flack's many admirers, she was a sophisticated and bold new presence in the music world and in the social and civil rights movements of the time, her friends including the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Angela Davis, whom Flack visited in prison while Davis faced charges for which she was acquitted for murder and kidnapping. Flack sang at the funeral of Jackie Robinson, major league baseball's first Black player, and was among the many guest performers on the feminist children's entertainment project created by Marlo Thomas, "Free to Be ... You and Me."

Flack's other hits from the 1970s included the cozy "Feel Like Makin' Love" and two duets with her close friend and former Howard classmate Donny Hathaway, "Where Is the Love" and "The Closer I Get to You" a partnership that ended in tragedy. In 1979, she and Hathaway were working on an album of duets when he suffered a breakdown during recording and later that night fell to his death from his hotel room in Manhattan.

"We were deeply connected creatively," Flack told Vibe in 2022, upon the 50th anniversary of the million-selling "Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway" album. "He could play anything, sing anything. Our musical synergy was unlike (anything) I'd had before or since."

She never matched her first run of success, although she did have a hit in the 1980s with the Peabo Bryson duet "Tonight, I Celebrate My Love" and in the 1990s with the Maxi Priest duet "Set the Night to Music." In the mid-90s, Flack received new attention after the Fugees recorded a Grammy-winning cover of "Killing Me Softly," which she eventually performed on stage with the hip-hop group.

Overall, she won five Grammys (three for "Killing Me Softly"), was nominated eight other times and was given a lifetime achievement Grammy in 2020, with John Legend and Ariana Grande among those praising her.

"I love that connection to other artists because we understand music, we live music, it's our language," Flack told songwriteruniverse.com in 2020. "Through

music we understand what we are thinking and feeling. No matter what challenge life presents, I am at home with my piano, on a stage, with my band, in the studio, listening to music. I can find my way when I hear music."

In 2022, Beyoncé placed Flack, Franklin and Diana Ross among others in a special pantheon of heroines name-checked in the Grammy-nominated "Queens Remix" of "Break My Soul."

Flack was briefly married to Stephen Novosel, an interracial relationship that led to tension with each of their families, and earlier had a son, the singer and keyboardist Bernard Wright. For years, she lived in Manhattan's Dakota apartment building, on the same floor as John Lennon and Yoko Ono, who became a close friend and provided liner notes for a Flack album of Beatles covers, "Let It Be Roberta." She also devoted extensive time to the Roberta Flack School of Music, based in New York and attended mostly by students between ages 6 to 14.

Roberta Cleopatra Flack, the daughter of musicians, was born in Black Moun-

tain, North Carolina, and raised in Arlington, Virginia. After graduating from Howard, she taught music in D.C.-area junior high schools for several years in her 20s, while performing after hours in clubs.

She sometimes backed other singers, but her own shows at Washington's renowned Mr. Henry's attracted such celebrity patrons as Burt Bacharach, Ramsey Lewis and Johnny Mathis. The club's owner, Henry Yaffe, converted an apartment directly above into a private studio, the Roberta Flack Room.

"I wanted to be successful, a serious all-around musician," she told The Telegraph in 2015. "I listened to a lot of Aretha, the Drifters, trying to do some of that myself, playing, teaching." Flack was signed to Atlantic Records and her debut album, "First Take," a blend of gospel, soul, flamenco and jazz, came out in 1969. One track was a love song by the English folk artist Ewan MacColl: "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," written in 1957 for his future wife, singer Peggy Seeger. Flack not only knew of the ballad, but used it while working with a glee club during her years as an educator.

"I was teaching at Banneker Junior High in Washington, D.C. It was part of the city where kids weren't that privileged, but they were privileged enough to have music education. I really wanted them to read music. First, I'd get their attention. (Flack starts singing a Supremes hit) 'Stop, in the name of love.' Then I could teach them!" she told the Tampa Bay Times in 2012.

"You have to do all sorts of things when you're dealing with kids in the inner-city," she said.

"I knew they'd like the part where ('The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face') goes 'The first time ever I kissed your mouth.' Ooh, 'Kissed your mouth!' Once the kids got past the giggles, we were good." □

Hat trick puts Alex Ovechkin 13 away from breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL career goals record

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**

AP Hockey Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Alex Ovechkin fired a perfect wrist shot past Calvin Pickard for his first goal of the game, scored from his office on the power play for his second and sailed a shot into an empty net from his own zone to complete the hat trick.

"I have pretty good chances to score more," Ovechkin said, "but I'll take three." Scoring three goals in the Washington Capitals' 7-3 rout of the Edmonton Oilers on Sunday put Ovechkin 13 away from breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL career record of 894 that long seemed unapproachable. Even after missing 16 games earlier this season because of a broken leg, the 39-year-old is on pace to pass Gretzky this spring.

"He amazes me night in, night out," Capitals goaltender Charlie Lindgren said. "He truly is the best." Linemate Dylan Strome, who has assisted on 16 of Ovechkin's 29 goals this season, acknowledged "it's going to be tough still" to set the record in March or April. Asked if scoring



Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8) skates among hats thrown onto the ice after he scored an empty-net goal for a hat trick during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the Edmonton Oilers, Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, in Washington.

13 in Washington's final 25 games was doable, Ovechkin said he's taking it "game by game."

If there are more games like the one against the Oilers, it's a matter of when, not if, Ovechkin reaches 895 and beyond.

"I've never seen a guy so hungry," longtime teammate Tom Wilson said.

"Some guys score and they (think), 'OK, I had a good night.' He comes back to the bench, he's asking if he can go out again like right away.

It's pretty fun, and it's been an amazing journey watching him do what he can do."

Watching from the other side, grizzled veteran Corey

Perry lamented the Oilers letting Ovechkin get open enough to do damage.

"You give the best goal scorer in the world that kind of time, he's going to put it in the back of the net," Perry said.

After scoring 10 minutes apart in the second period, Ovechkin almost beat Pickard a third time in the third

but was denied. He got eight shots on Edmonton's goaltender and had four more attempts.

It took an empty net for the hats to fly from the juiced-up crowd of 18,573 fans who chanted "Ovi! Ovi!" throughout. Ovechkin conceded he was a little surprised Oilers coach Kris Knoblauch pulled Pickard for an extra attacker while trailing by three, but it turned out to be good for the Capitals when Ovechkin scored from 139 feet out. "They got an elite team with elite offensive players and 17,000 people in the stands were hoping they pull the goalie," Strome said.

"We'll take it. Obviously he'll take it, and it was a lucky, fortunate bounce. But I guess when you have 882 goals, you get those bounces."

Ovechkin tied Jaromir Jagr's record with 135 game-winning goals, and the 32nd hat trick of his 20-year NHL career moved him into a tie for fifth on that list with Hall of Famer Phil Esposito. His next will be No. 30, reaching that mark for an 18th season. □

Associated Press

Shaun White's new snowboard league to head to Aspen and mountain in China where he ended his career

By **EDDIE PELLIS**

AP National Writer

After opening in Aspen, Colorado, next week, Shaun White's new halfpipe league will travel to the mountain in China where he closed out his career at the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

The Snow League announced the remainder of its four-stop, opening-season schedule Monday, which includes a trip in December to the Secret Garden snowpark in Zhangjiakou, China, followed by a return to Aspen in February 2026, then the season finale in Laax, Switzerland, after next year's Milan-Cortina Olympics.

The opener is set for March 7-8 at Buttermilk outside of Aspen.

White's final run came at Secret Garden, where the three-time gold medalist finished fourth to cap off his fifth Olympics on an emotional day on the halfpipe.

After retiring, he set out to create a league that would bring together the world's top riders, whose sport has long lacked a well-defined circuit and has also struggled to offer top prize money at many of its marquee events.

The Snow League is offering a \$1.6 million prize pool, with \$370,000 for each event and \$160,000 to the league's champions after all four events.

Defending Olympic champion and top-ranked Ayumu Hirano is invited to compete in next week's

16-man contest, along with his younger brother, Kaishu.

Also invited is second-ranked Ruka Hirano, who is not related to the brothers, along with Americans Chase Josey and Chase Blackwell.

The women's contest is scheduled to include Olympic silver and bronze medalists Queralt Castellet and Sena Tomita along with Americans Maddie Mastro and Maddy Schaffrick.

In a unique twist, the finals of the league's events will be head-to-head, best-of-3 bracket-style tournaments in which riders will have to drop in from both sides of the halfpipe on their first two runs.

Freeskiing on the halfpipe

will be added to The Snow League starting with the event in China, though no names have yet been publicized for those contests.

At the Beijing Olympics, Eileen Gu won medals in all three freeskiing disciplines gold in halfpipe and Big Air and silver in slopestyle. □



Gold medal winner Japan's Ayumu Hirano, left, is congratulated by United States' Shaun White after the men's halfpipe finals at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Feb. 11, 2022, in Zhangjiakou, China.

Associated Press

College sports put a twist on team spirit, with signature brews at games and grocers

By STEVE MEGARGEE
AP Sports Writer
MILWAUKEE (AP) — Missy Vraney and Kristin Westphal didn't go to Marquette. Neither did any of their relatives. Yet their family tradition of attending Golden Eagles basketball games spans generations.

"Whenever our uncle couldn't go, our dad would take one of us and just kind of alternate," Vraney recalls.

They're still supporting the school regularly just in beer money rather than tuition fees. It happens every time they buy a Marquette Golden Ale before heading to the Fiserv Forum stands.



Jimmy Gross serves Jonathon Holdway some Third Space Marquette beer before an NCAA college basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2025, in Milwaukee.

Associated Press

The number of Learfield schools with licensing deals specifically with craft beers has more than doubled in that time – from 16 in 2023 to 36 this year.

Cory Moss, Learfield's president of brand management and marketing, acknowledges he would have been surprised by this kind of growth four or five years ago. Then he started noticing more interest from the schools themselves and from various local craft breweries wanting to establish partnerships.

"When schools got really behind it and the craft industry really started to take it seriously, that's when it really started to grow," Moss said. "And that growth hasn't been surprising."

It represents a major change in the college sports landscape, considering how many schools weren't even selling alcoholic beverages at their athletic events not so long ago. The Southeastern Conference didn't permit the sales of beer and wine at sporting events until 2019.

That policy change spurred Tennessee and other SEC programs to start getting local breweries to launch signature beers that could be sold at their games as well as in stores or tap rooms off campus. Tennessee partnered with Knoxville-based Yee-Haw Brewing Company last summer to make Vol Lager the exclusive craft beer of the Tennessee Volunteers.

"I think for the distributors and even the companies to get a return on their investment in terms of the sponsorship, being able to sell it within the venues is a big deal because when our fans can see it 100,000 people walking into Neyland Stadium they might grow fan affinity to buy it at the grocery store also," said Alicia Longworth, Tennessee's deputy athletics director/chief marketing officer.

"With the timing, it was good for the business and it was good for us." □

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This marks the first season since Marquette entered a partnership with Milwaukee-based Third Space Brewing to sell Marquette Golden Ale the school's officially licensed and co-branded craft beer at Golden Eagles sporting events as well as in Third Space outlets and area groceries.

As part of the deal, 15% of the revenues go back to Marquette.

"People are extremely excited about it," said Andy Gehl, the co-founder and president of Third Space Brewing.

"People love drinking beer with their favorite school, their favorite sports team's logo on it. That's No. 1. Also, they want to support businesses that support their university, and vice versa."

This has become the latest fund-raising trend for college athletics.

Learfield, which manages sports sponsorships for over 160 universities and licensing agreements for nearly 800 colleges, says that 93 of its schools had licensing deals for alcoholic beverages for the first six months of the current fiscal year. That's a 57.6% rise from fiscal year 2023, when 59 schools had deals for their own signature alcoholic beverage.